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13

6 June 1962

Mr. Roger Hilsman
The Director of Intelligence and Research
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Roger:

Attached are three copies of a memorandum which we have prepared as a briefing note to our Acting Director. It deals with probable Communist reactions to certain possible US courses of action in Laos other than those dealt with in SNIE 58-5-62: Probable Communist Reactions to Certain Possible US Actions with Respect to Laos, dated 31 May 1962. It has not been coordinated with the other agencies and thus represents the view of the Board of National Estimates only.

Sincerely,

Sherman Kent
Assistant Director
National Estimates

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6 June 1962

Mr. Michael Forestal
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Forestal:

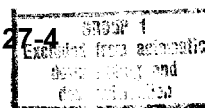
Attached are five copies of a memorandum which we have prepared as a briefing note to our Acting Director. It deals with probable Communist reactions to certain possible US courses of action in Laos other than those dealt with in SMIE 58-5-62: Probable Communist Reactions to Certain Possible US Actions with Respect to Laos, dated 31 May 1962. It has not been coordinated with the other agencies and thus represents the view of the Board of National Estimates only.

At your suggestion I have forwarded three copies of this paper to Roger Hilsman.

Sincerely,

Sherman Kent
Assistant Director
National Estimates

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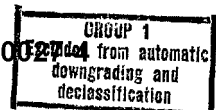
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COURSE FIVE: Air Action Against North Vietnam. US air attacks against supply bases in North Vietnam, whether undertaken in conjunction with a US occupation of the Mekong River areas or with US offensive operations in Laos to clear the area of North Vietnamese forces, would almost certainly be regarded by Peiping and Moscow as the forerunner of a military offensive against North Vietnam. They would almost certainly feel obliged to provide Hanoi the air support necessary to protect North Vietnamese territory. Moreover the Communist side would probably launch air attacks against US supply points in Laos, and, possibly, in Thailand. The Communist side would be concerned to keep the hostilities from spreading and to that end would probably be willing to enter into negotiations. We do not believe that there would be significant differences between Moscow and Peiping, insofar as the question of coming to the aid of Hanoi is concerned. The Chinese leadership might be more eager than the Soviets to conduct retaliation raids on US bases in Thailand, and South Vietnam, and to attack US naval units in the area.

COURSE SIX: Amphibious Operations Against North Vietnam. This situation assumes a division-strength landing in the Vinh area followed by a drive west to the Laos border to link up with US forces in Laos so as to seal off the main routes from North Vietnam into Laos and South Vietnam and to provide a slice of North Vietnamese territory what the US might offer to evacuate in return for a North Vietnamese withdrawal from both Laos and South Vietnam.

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As we understand the situation, this course of action might be taken in conjunction with or subsequent to the initiation of offensive operations in Laos, or as an alternative to such a course of action.

Direct military operations against North Vietnam would be considered by the Communist Bloc as a direct challenge and they would not hesitate to respond to it. Moscow and Peiping would provide air support to the North Vietnamese. Communist China would almost certainly provide additional military forces if they were needed. Communist forces elsewhere, such as Korea, might initiate military operations against non-Communist territories to divert or divide US strength. US naval units in the area would almost certainly be engaged by Soviet and Chinese Communist air and naval forces; supply and operational bases in Laos, South Vietnam and Thailand would probably be attacked by Communist air forces.

Nevertheless, the Communist side would probably seek to keep the struggle from spreading and confined to conventional weapons.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Bill

Bundy 2 copies
Sullivan 1 copy

I thought you might want to see the memo which we prepared giving our ONE views on the Communist reactions to those courses of action which were not considered in our recent SNIE. This paper has been prepared for the Director's guidance in the White House discussions. It has not been coordinated and therefore does not represent any views other than our own. Please regard this as a "bootleg operation."

File copy

Chester L. Cooper
6 June 62

(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

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